**Argumentation theory[[1]](#footnote-1)**



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Another way of analysing language is by looking at the argumentation of a text. Put differently, which points of view does the sender of the text want the receiver to agree to, and which means are used to make sure of that?

Argumentation theory has its roots in classic [rhetoric](https://theenglishhandbook.systime.dk/index.php?id=155). Therefore, many of the elements of argumentation theory come from the art of rhetoric such as [the three modes of persuasion](https://theenglishhandbook.systime.dk/index.php?id=155#c281). However, argumentation theory does have its own method which will be explained in the following sections.

When you argue, you try to win support for your argument by coming up with reasons to why your argument should be supported.

**EXAMPLE OF AN ARGUMENT**SHARE

You might have the argument that Danish high school students are too stressed and your reasons for that argument are that Danish high school students are too stressed because they have too many written assignments and too much homework on top of a full day at school.

**Toulmin’s model of argumentation**SHARE

One method of constructing a convincing argument is by using Stephen Toulmin's model of argumentation. Toulmin’s model breaks down an argument into 6 basic parts. His approach identifies and separates these six components of an argument into a specific order.



Stephen Toulmin: The Use of Argument. Cambridge University Press, 1958.

**Claim**SHARE

The most simple form of an argument is a claim. A claim is the statement to be argued.

**Example**: *Organic food is good for you*

Such a claim, on its own, has no reasons/data to support whether it is true or false. Therefore, more is required for the claim to be convincing.

**Data**SHARE

As mentioned earlier, the point of an argument is to persuade or convince the receiver/audience that your claim is true or best. Therefore, a claim such as o*rganic food is good for you* needs something that justifies this claim. It needs facts or evidence to prove the claim. These facts/evidence are called data.

**Example**: *Research shows that there are fewer pesticides in organic food*

Now, the claim *organic food is good for you* is supported by the data *research shows there are fewer pesticides in organic food.*

**Warrant**SHARE

A warrant supports and substantiates your data and claim and acts as a bridge between them. It can be said to deliver the punch line - the ultimate argument that is meant to convince the receiver. However, warrants can prove somewhat tricky as they are often implicit in arguments.

**Example**: *Food without pesticides is healthier*

**Toulmin's extended model**SHARE



Stephen Toulmin: The Use of Argument. Cambridge University Press, 1958.

**Backing**SHARE

Sometimes the validity of the warrant may be called into question. To demonstrate the validity of the warrant, it may therefore be necessary to introduce additional data or information to back the warrant. This is called backing. Backing functions as a sort of justification for a warrant. Its purpose is to provide an explanation to why the warrant(s) function(s) as a reason to accept the claim.

**Example**: *There has been evidence that children and adults carry pesticides in their bodies when not eating organic food*

A backing can be based on diverse criteria such as belief, law, authority, ethics, moral etc.

**Qualifiers**SHARE

Qualifiers are used to express the relative strengths of warrants. Qualifiers support the claim the warrants justify. Qualifiers can be a word or an expression which the sender of the claim will use to support his/her claim.

Qualifiers can either provide extra support for the claim or make the claim more neutral

**Examples**: *There is no doubt that organic food is good for you* (support) - *Organic food may be good for you* (neutral)

**Rebuttal**SHARE

A rebuttal acknowledges that the argument has limitations. Therefore, a rebuttal captures the reasons for why the warrant may not hold.

**Example**: *However, some people argue that the level of pesticides does not matter to humans*

Rebuttals can be used to counter argue, in fact giving your original claim more weight. The receiver/audience may perceive your rebuttal as a sign of objectivity - seeing things from several perspectives. It may contribute to persuade the receiver/audience.

**EXERCISE: ARGUMENTATION THEORY - COME UP WITH DATA AND WARRANT**SHARE

1. Claim: Alice is a U.S. citizen.
2. Data: Alice is born in Puerto Rico.
3. Warrant: People born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens by birth.
4. Claim: Wearing a helmet when cycling should be made compulsory.
5. Data: Research shows that helmets lessen the impact on the biker when crashing thus heightening the safety
6. Warrant: Therefore, wearing a helmet will provide safety for the biker.
7. Claim: Social media makes you fatter
8. Data:
9. Warrant:
10. Claim: Fitness is the new religion
11. Data:
12. Warrant:

**EXERCISE: ARGUMENTATION THEORY - BUILD YOUR OWN ARGUMENTS**SHARE

1. Have a debate in your class.
2. The motion is: ***Fitness is the new religion***
	* Half of the class: In favour of the motion
	* The other half: Against the motion
3. In groups of 3, build 2 arguments consisting of data, warrant, backing, qualifiers and rebuttal.
4. Discuss in class by using a loose debate structure.

**Monological argumentation**SHARE

Monological argumentation means that only one person has gathered knowledge to construct an argument. The knowledge gathered may be based on several sources and therefore, it may be objective and reliable in its form. However, such knowledge may also include subjective knowledge such as own beliefs and hypothetical knowledge (*what if.*.). In a monological argumentation there is no counterpart - no one to obstruct your arguments. Therefore, the focus of monological argumentation is how to construct the argument and to draw conclusions based on the arguments.

In monological argumentation the construction of arguments is an internal process sometimes with an output such as a [speech](https://theenglishhandbook.systime.dk/index.php?id=155#c279), an article etc. There is no dialogue between the parties involved. There is a sender (a journalist writing an article or a politician giving a speech) and a receiver, but it is not possible for the receiver/audience to respond directly to the sender. Therefore, one can argue that monological argumentation is a static form of argumentation.

**EXAMPLES: MONOLOGICAL ARGUMENTATION**SHARE

* A political speech by a politician.
* An article by a journalist.
* An academic article by a professor of a certain field of study.
* A political manifesto by a political party.

**Dialogical argumentation**SHARE

Opposite monological argumentation, dialogical argumentation involves more than one person. In dialogical argumentation, two or more persons interact to construct arguments for or against a certain claim. One person may construct a particular argument which another person will dispute by constructing a counter-argument. The parties participating in a dialogical argumentation may also make use of strategies in order to convince the other party to draw certain conclusions based on the argumentation presented.

Dialogical argumentation also makes use of elements from monological argumentation, as the persons involved will have constructed some of their arguments before the dialogical argumentation begins, e.g. in a court case.

Therefore, the construction of arguments in a dialogical argumentation is both an internal and external process. However, the external process is more dominant and therefore, dialogical argumentation is a dynamic process as arguments are primarily constructed during the exchange of dialogue between the parties involved.

**EXAMPLES: DIALOGICAL ARGUMENTATION**SHARE

* Lawyers arguing a court case.
* Businessmen negotiating with each other.
* Politicians debating in parliament over a new bill.
* Governments negotiating in the EU over trade agreements.
* Family members arguing about who should walk the dog.

**Different types of arguments**SHARE

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The purpose of using different types of arguments is to convince your audience. Therefore, you should consider the situation, the sender, the channel, message sent and the audience when choosing which argument to use in a particular situation.

Some types of arguments appeal to ethos, some to pathos and others to logos. You will find these different types of arguments in all kinds of texts such as text messages, commercials, articles and speeches.

The types of arguments used will tell you something about what is characteristic of the text in question. In a longer text you will often find more types of arguments than in a shorter one.

**The sign argument**SHARE

The argumentation is built on the fact that something is a *sign* of something else.

*X* is a sign of *Y*

**Example:***The growing drought in the world (****is a sign****) of global warming*

**The cause argument**SHARE

The argumentation is built on the fact that something is the *cause* of something else.

*X*is the cause of *Y*

**Example:***The badminton player changed his strategy and****therefore****he won the match*

**The classification argument**SHARE

The argumentation is built on the fact that when it applies to the majority, it also applies to the rest.

When something applies to *5X* then it also applies to*X*

**Example:***Teenagers sleep with their smart phone (indirectly: therefore, you also do that)*

**The generalisation argument**SHARE

The argument is built on the fact that when it applies to one, it applies to all. Therefore, this argument is the opposite of the classification argument.

When something applies to *X* then it also applies to *10X*

**Example:***I am young and sleep with my smart phone (indirectly: therefore, everyone who is young sleeps with their smart phone)*

**The comparative argument**SHARE

The argument is built on that fact that you compare one event, thing, phenomenon with something else. If it applies to this event, it will also apply to the next one.

The difference between the comparative argument and the generalisation argument is that the comparative argument only compares with one incident, whereas the generalisation argument makes one incident apply to several.

If it applies to*X*, it also applies to *Y* **Example:***Of course, going skiing will be fun - it was fun last year*

**The authoritative argument**SHARE

The construction of the authoritative argument relies on the use of others to provide evidence for the validity of the claim. Therefore, the authoritative argument appeals to ethos.

*X* is true because *Y*says so

The authoritative argument can rely on different types of evidence:

**Experts:** When the argument relies on an authority within the subject in question.

**Example:***Elon Musk, owner of Tesla, says that electric cars are the future.*

**Using a quantity:** When the argument relies on a quantity to support the claim in question. If a quantity supports the claim then it must be right. The difference between the classification argument and the authoritative argument is that the authoritative argument relies on an authority.

**Example:** *1.86 billion users cannot be wrong. Facebook is the most popular social media in the world*

**Postulate:** When the argument relies on a postulate made by the person constructing the argument. This is done verbally as there is no authority besides the person making the claim who can state the truth of the claim.

**Example:** *It is obvious that you should not use your mobile while driving because it is dangerous*

**Experience:** When the argument relies on experience. A teacher may use his/her experience when talking about a certain subject. This is opposite from using an expert as authority as the argument here is based on experience and not expert knowledge. **Example:** *From my own experience, you become a better student when doing homework for at least three hours a day (I did that)*

**The motivational argument**SHAR

The argument appeals to people’s emotions (pathos) such as feelings, fear, sympathy, ethics etc.. This type of argument is very much used in commercials. You will feel better by doing *X* **Example:** *If you buy this lotion, you will look younger*

A variation of the motivational argument is argumentum ad baculum (where you use threat in your argumentation)

This type of argument only appeals to the receiver's fear **Example:** *If you support the other candidate, I'll make sure everyone knows your secret*

**The choice of word argument**SHARE

The argument is not really a 'real' type of argument but takes into consideration the way words are used when constructing the argument.

Through the use of words the person constructing the argument tries to convince the audience. **Example:** *Using the words 'restructuring the company' instead of 'firing'* Words have the same [denotation](https://theenglishhandbook.systime.dk/index.php?id=167#c413). However, the [connotation](https://theenglishhandbook.systime.dk/index.php?id=167#c413) of the word(s) is different.

**EXERCISE: DETERMINE THE TYPE OF ARGUMENT**SHARE

1. Determine the type of argument in the following sentences.
	* High school students are constantly partying.
	* All experts agree that smoking causes cancer.
	* She must be very hungry as she has eaten 10 cookies in 5 minutes.
2. Determine the type of argument used in the tweet by Donald Trump.

Arnold Schwarzenegger isn't voluntarily leaving the Apprentice, he was fired by his bad (pathetic) ratings, not by me. Sad end to great show.

1. Pair work: Each person constructs two types of arguments. The other person tries to determine which type of argument it is.
1. Source: ”The English Handbook” https://theenglishhandbook.systime.dk/?id=168 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)